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Firing by CIA Possible Motive in Spy Case

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WASHINGTON—Spy suspect Edward L. Howard was fired in 1983 by the CIA, and anger over his discharge may have prompted him to provide information to the Soviets, U.S. officials said Thursday.

Those officials refused to give any reasons for the firing of Howard, who is now the object of an intense FBI manhunt, and one source said the records indicated that he was "allowed to resign."

'Motive of Revenge'

But "a motive of revenge or disgruntlement has been known to be involved in other espionage cases," one official noted.

Another source said that it is "not entirely clear whether (Howard) had his final walking papers (from the CIA) when he was first in contact with the Soviets." However, he added that he understood Howard was not working for the Soviets when he was carrying out CIA assignments.

Intelligence sources have emphasized that Howard was not a classic "mole"—a spy who has infiltrated an intelligence agency to obtain information from it.

Those sources said that Howard was discussing a CIA assignment at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow under a State Department cover when he was fired.

Curtis Porter, Howard's former supervisor at the New Mexico Leg-

islative Finance Committee, where he went to work after leaving the CIA, said Howard had told him that he left the department after being assigned as a Foreign Service officer to the embassy in Moscow.

But department spokesman Charles E. Redman said that Howard had never worked for the department or in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in any capacity. He said Howard had been employed by the Agency for International Development from September, 1976, until March, 1979, when he resigned.

Howard did not work for the CIA when he was with AID, one Administration source said. The FBI has said that Howard worked for the CIA from January, 1981, to June, 1983.

Meanwhile, an FBI source acknowledged that Howard dropped from sight on the night of Sept. 21 while FBI agents had him under surveillance at his home in a suburb of Santa Fe, N. M. But the source emphasized that the agents had no authority to arrest Howard until two days later, when they obtained an arrest warrant.

"It was a loose-perimeter surveillance, not meant to contain someone," the source said. He described Howard as "a trained agent" and said he eluded the FBI agents in the early morning hours of a "moonless night." There was a half moon over Santa Fe that night,

but weather records indicate that it was obscured by stormy weather.

An intelligence source said that the Soviet KGB defector who provided information that helped lead the FBI to Howard has also given information that may implicate a second former CIA operative as a Soviet spy. But the source stressed that the investigation involving the second individual is ongoing and had reached no conclusions yet.

House Hearing on Spies

The defector, Vitaly Yurchenko, left his temporary Soviet diplomatic assignment in Rome in August and now is in the United States. The information he gave was added to other data the FBI had that then led them to Howard, the intelligence source said.

The House Select Committee on Intelligence plans a hearing next week on Yurchenko's disclosures about American spies, Rep. Bill Richardson (D-N. M.) said. He said that Rep. Lee H. Hamilton (D-Ind.), the panel's chairman, had agreed to his request for the hearing.

However, a Senate Intelligence Committee source questioned whether public hearings on the Yurchenko information would produce anything worthwhile, noting that Yurchenko's leads are still being checked.